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Design & Access Statement

Leek to Leek Brook Railway Reinstatement



1.0 Executive Summary

The reinstatement of the disused railway from Leek to Leek Brook will have a minor impact on the current location, habitat and environment when reviewing the key consultees involved in delivering this development. It is intended to maintain a segregated walkway alongside the Leek to Leek Brook railway line. The walkway North of the Leek terminus will also be maintained during this development. The economic benefit of the reinstatement of the railway connection with Churnet Valley Railway (CVR) and Moorland & City Railway (MCR) to reconnect Leek Town will bring a number of important benefits such as a new station on the edge of the Cornhill development site as well as new terminus for the Churnet Valley Railway and the Cauldon Line potentially also linking other visitor attractions such as recently approved Moneystone leisure development. The reinstatement will increase visitor numbers and the local economy, creating jobs and additional visitor attractions for Leek and wider areas.

2.0 Introduction

This statement has been prepared on behalf of Churnet Valley Railway (CVR) (1992) Plc for the reinstatement of the former railway line at Barnfield Road, Leek known as the disused Leek to Leek Brook railway line. This development relates solely to the reinstatement of the former railway line track bed to the area shown below. The development will comprise of the installation of a new railway line, pedestrian route with a protected fence as well as associated works. The methodology proposed has considered the views of key consultees including Moorland & City Railway (MCR), Staffordshire Moorlands District Council as well as the Adopted Churnet Valley Masterplan Supplementary Planning Document 2014. This development will comprise of the reinstatement of a single track railway on the former double track bed on land currently owned by Moorlands & City Railway (MCR) and Staffordshire Moorlands District Council (SMDC). The land concerned with this development is the land owned by SMDC which is subject to a lease with CVR. The information below provides details of the proposal and the thought processes involved in its development, design and access.

3.0 Background

The Churnet Valley Masterplan was adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance in 2014, refer to Appendix 1. This identified the potential for extension of canal, railway, plus restoration of Leek Brook signal box (and station) as an opportunity to address the employment, tourism and leisure needs of the area (Masterplan 7.3.5). The masterplan specifically included the 're-opening rail line' between Leek Brook and Leek (Cornhill) as a development strategy action.

The Churnet Valley Railway (CVR) currently operates a 10-mile heritage railway between Froghall and Ipstones, Staffordshire. Following discussions between CVR and the Council in February 2017, CVR has agreed to lease land in Council ownership which is the former disused track bed and reinstate the track in order to connect it to the existing railway at Leek Brook junction. This offer is subject to SMDC securing planning permission for extension of the railway from the existing line at Leek Brook to Barnfields Road, Leek. This would allow CVR to fulfil ambitions to extend the route back into Leek.

4.0 Location

The proposal is to reinstate single track railway over the former track bed at Cornhill / Barnfields Road, Leek

to the current operational CVR rail-head at Leek Brook, refer to Appendix 2 for the location plan which shows the development area highlighted in red. The reinstatement of the track at Leek to the current rail terminal at Leek Brook will connect to the CVR heritage railway.

5.0 Previous History

The former railway track bed and former Leek Station which was located on the now Morrisons site was opened by North Staffordshire Railway in 1849. The Leek station and railway line to Stoke on Trent was in use until 1956 with passenger services to Uttoxeter until 1965. The line was finally closed following the closure of the freight services in the 1970's and the station and track dismantled shortly thereafter in 1973. The land has since been disused used by walkers and cyclist from the existing access point off Barnfields Road, Leek. The proposed Leek terminus is approximately ½ mile South from the historical Leek station site.



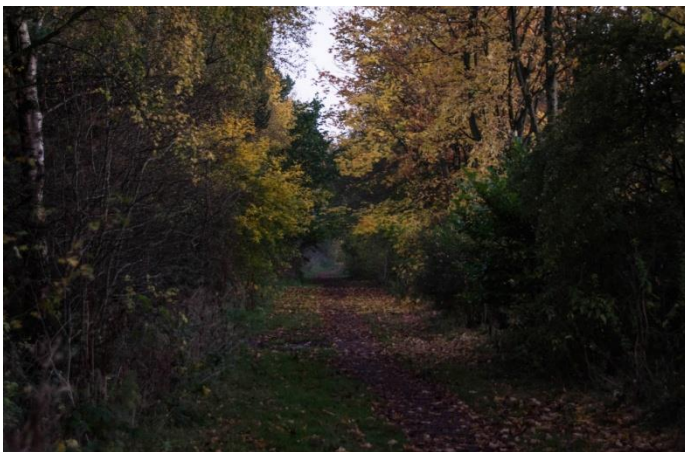
Illustration of the former Leek Station shortly before closure

6.0 Existing Land Use

The site is currently a disused track bed approximately 1km (¾ mile) from Cornhill / Barnfields Road, Leek to the Leek Brook railway junction adjacent to the sewage farm, Leek. The land is accessible on foot and cycles off Barnfields Road, Leek as well as crossing points along the length of the former track for pedestrian and vehicular purposes to service the sewage works. Severn Trent has sewage pipes laid beneath the track bed. The impact of the new track has been assessed by CVR and MCR, refer to Appendix 3. In summary the sewage pipes will remain in-situ dependent on their condition. The pipework has been surveyed to establish its condition but either way the pipes will either remain or be relayed and costs associated with these works have been considered by CVR, refer to Appendix 3 for further detail.

This stretch of disused track bed has one tunnel known as Birchall Tunnel, see below illustration. The tunnel is owned by SMDC, known as Bridge 51. It is not currently subject to any maintenance schedules by either railway company. CVR have reported that its condition is good and it would only require minor attention to bring it back into use. For further details refer to Appendix 3.

The track bed and surrounding land has been left allowing the land to become overgrown with vegetation, scrub and low quality trees since its closure. This attracts ecology and provides for environment for birds, insects and wildlife to inhabit. A formal screening opinion has been completed by Staffordshire Moorlands District Council on the likely impact this development would have on this environment. In summary the screening concluded that a formal Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is not considered necessary for the size of this development albeit the screening process and opinion it has considered, environmental, architectural, archaeology, flooding and existing infrastructure. The conclusion provided is that this development is unlikely to have significant effect and therefore an EIA is not required; refer to Appendix 4 for further details.



Illustrations Leek to Leek Brook disused track bed



Illustration of Birchall Tunnel, Bridge No.51

7.0 Existing Surrounding Areas & Properties

The proposed reinstatement of the Leek to Leek Brook track bed is currently surrounded by employment land Cornhill / Barnfields Road, Cauldon Canal, Birchall playing fields, the River Churnet and Birchall Golf Course and terminating at Leek Brook Sewage Works, refer to the satellite image below. The Cornhill site off

Barnfields Road has recently obtained planning permission for a major residential development including land allocation for a new railway station supporting this proposal for the reinstatement of the Leek to Leek Brook railway line.

The Leek to Leek Brook railway reinstatement will connect to the existing CVR railway network benefitting from the heritage railway already in operation at Froghall and Cheddleton.



Illustration showing the site and the surrounding areas.

8.0 Pre Application Consultation

The application is being submitted by Staffordshire Moorlands District Council Regeneration Department in association with Churnet Valley Railway (CVR) and the leaseholders of the development land at Cornhill. SMDC has consulted with the local Planning Department regarding the Environment Impact of bringing forward an application for the reinstatement of this site and this concluded that this development would not have a significant Environmental Impact considering its size, location and use, refer to Appendix 4. This aside, further independent consultant reports have been prepared in readiness for an application to consider noise pollution, landscape (cycle and walking routes) arboriculture assessment, protected species and flooding as well as an independent report provided by CVR on the sewerage system and underground drainage survey.

The reinstatement of the Leek to Leek Brook railway is also supported by SMDC Cabinet for Wards Leek South & Cheddleton, Councillor Sybil Ralphs refer to Appendix 5 for further information.

The Churnet Valley Masterplan was adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance in 2014, refer to Appendix 1. The masterplan specifically included the 're-opening rail line' between Leek Brook and Leek (Cornhill) as a development strategy action and so this development is in line with the Churnet Valley adopted masterplan, refer to Appendix 1.



9.0 Environmental Impact

In bringing forward the reinstatement of the disused railway SMDC have obtained independent consultant reports for which will have an impact on the existing habitat, infrastructure and environment of the development site. The findings of these reports are summarised below.

Flood Risks & Culverts Report

A Flood and Culverts Assessment has been carried out for this development for SMDC by Michael Lambert Associates. In summary, the flood risk and culverts for this development is low risk however for further information refer to Appendix 6, (excluding appendices).

Arboriculture Impact Assessment

An Arboriculture Impact Assessment has been carried out for this development for SMDC by Hamps Valley Limited. In summary the assessment concludes that the existing tree and scrub cover along the 1.3km (3/4 mile) stretch of disused railway contained no trees of a standard that would be considered to be a constraint on planning. For further information, please refer to Appendix 7.

Protected Species Report.

A Bat Transect Survey has been carried out for this development for SMDC by Brindle Green Ecological Consultants. In summary the report concluded that this development area supported commuting and foraging habitat with moderate suitability. Further bat activity surveys were undertaken and across the site and was considered to be low across the majority of the site, with moderate activity including foraging and social behaviours recorded to the South of the site. The report provides recommendations during the construction works to protect the vegetation, scrub and trees along the stretch of the development. For further information and for the full report, refer to Appendix 8.

Noise Impact Assessment

A noise impact assessment has been carried out for this development for SMDC by 24 Acoustics, Romsey. In summary the assessment has determined that the noise level at all existing / proposed residential receptors will be below the level defined by the World Health Organisation as the onset of moderate community annoyance. The railway operation will produce an increase in the overall noise level relative to the prevailing noise level and this will be audible externally and potentially internally at some receptor properties. The greatest impact may occur at the approved Cornhill regeneration site, however, as this has not yet been developed it is assumed that the planning approval has considered measures such as appropriate site layout and provision of acoustic screening and glazing as well as alternative means of ventilation if necessary which will reduce the noise impact to an acceptable level. The report concluded that this development would not have a significant adverse noise impact at any of the receptor properties and there is no reason, on noise grounds, why planning permission should not be granted. For further information, refer to Appendix 9.

10.0 Proposed Use

The proposed use of the site is for the reinstatement of the railway line to the disused track bed in order to reconnect this to the existing operational heritage rail network currently operated by Churnet Valley Railway (CVR). The purpose of the reinstatement is to reconnect Leek to Churnet Valley as in accordance with the adopted Churnet Valley Masterplan, supplementary document 2014. This will provide for a rail connection to support Leek / Churnet Valley and the surrounding areas such as the recently approved Moneystone Leisure development and to encourage and promote further important transport links for the continued regeneration, tourism, employment and growth of the Town of Leek and the surrounding areas.

The reinstatement of the Leek to Leek Brook railway will be used as an extension to the Churnet Valley Heritage railway line. This railway will be used as a heritage railway for tourism and leisure.

The land is proposed to continue to be accessible to walkers and cyclists alongside the railway by providing a segregated zone within the railway boundary. In consultation with SMDC Landscapes Department, the existing Leek promoted walk which is North of the Leek terminus will be run alongside the proposed Leek terminus. In addition, the proposed railway reinstatement from Leek to Leek Brook has been used for walkers and cyclist for a number of years and although it is our understanding in consultation with SMDC Landscape Department that this is not a statutory route for walkers or cyclists other than the area marked, refer to Appendix 10. It is proposed to provide a footpath for walkers / cyclists at the bottom of the embankment away from the railway formation. The exit point for pedestrians will remain at Barnfields Road and will link up with an unnamed road, unofficially known as Water Works Lane at Leek Brook.



Illustration showing current CVR railway in use.

11.0 Amount

In bringing this development forward, strategic marketing and economic report has been provided by Moorland & City Railway (MCR) in consultation with Staffordshire Moorlands District Council and Churnet Valley Railway (CVR), refer to Appendix 11, to establish the feasibility of reinstating the Leek to Leek Brook



former railway track line.

This identifies that the operator of this proposal, CVR presently has a round trip of 26 miles placing it at the top end for length of route in the country. This provides a good base on which to reinstate this former track line which in essence, Leek would become the operational hub for CVR-MCR and simultaneously provide basis for further tourism development in Leek, refer to the attached link which shows the extent of the proposed route, <https://www.churnet-valley-railway.co.uk/line-guide>.

This report further advises that the heritage railway industry in the UK attracts between 5.3 -7.8 million visitors a year. In 2011, these operations carried 7.1 million passengers generating approximately £92million to local economies through train journeys, catering, shops and workshops. In terms of visitor profiles these were typically family groups (65%) or couples (27%).

In addition, this report also details specifically CVR's visitor numbers and profile. In 1996 the CVR heritage railway was reopened and attracted 7000 visitors. In 1999 Consall station was re-opened and within a year visitor numbers increased to 25,000. Following this, in 2003, Froghall station was reconstructed. In 2011 CVR heritage railway received approximately 70,000 visitors a year. The majority of these visitors are local residents from Staffordshire with numbers peaking in school holidays, Christmas, Easter and summer.

MCR state that extending the line to Leek, Stoke on Trent and Alton Towers is expected to greatly enhance access, connect tourism 'zones', increase visitor number on the heritage railway and therefore spur tourism development in towns such as Leek. This will enhance and supplement the also approved Cornhill Development and may lead to a potential extension to the recently approved Moneystone Leisure development and possibly the success and viability of the reopening of the station and disused railway to Alton Towers.

In relation to other Heritage operators without a main line link, the visitor numbers are generally comparable, however the MCR report further suggests that there is supporting evidence based on comparable railways that in connecting Leek to the existing heritage rail network, it has the potential to increase CVR visitor numbers in order of 95,000 to around 100,000 so between 36-43%.

It is expected that the reinstatement of the Leek to Leek Brook railway will generate on average an additional 25,000 passengers per year as a realistic and an achievable figure for visitor numbers. This will comprise of passengers, diners, walkers etc with an average spend of £25.00/head. The spend is analysed in detail within the MCR report however in summary equates to £952,000 gross expenditure per annum from the railways operation predominately focused on the town of Leek. Of this it is expected that a further £577,600 net additional expenditure per annum injected into the local economy and 13.4 FTE jobs supported and a net increase in GVA of £255,360 per annum after five years.

The above is a summary of the Moorland and City Railway Strategic Marketing and Economic Report for the Railways extension from Leek to Leek Brook, for further detail, refer to Appendix 11.

12.0 Layout

The scheme proposal has been designed to utilise the former double track bed to lay a new single-track line from Leek, Barnfields Road to Leek Brook, refer to the location plan; refer to Appendix 2. The single track railway line will be sited on the West side of the original, doubled-track, disused railway line. Based on the Imperial 12'-0" width that equates to 3.6m wide track. The track will not extend Northwards beyond the Cornhill / Barnfield Road development site due to the proposed link road severing the track bed. The exit point to the Railway from Leek will be via the existing route off Barnfields Road and once operational from

the Froghall and Cheddleton CVR railway stations.



Illustration example showing the area North of proposed Leek terminus beyond Barnfields Road exit point.

A footpath is planned to be maintained along the route of the reinstated railway line from Barnfields Road, Leek, South towards Leek Brook to an unnamed road, known as Water Works Lane. This is intended to be in keeping with the rural setting.

The wider layout will connect this $\frac{3}{4}$ mile former track bed to the CVR railway network which is currently 26 miles, refer to the attached link to show the extent of the existing CVR heritage rail network, <https://www.churnet-valley-railway.co.uk/line-guide>.

13.0 Scale

The proposal is to reinstate a single-track railway line on the West side of the original, doubled-track, disused railway line formation. The size of the track will be the standard gauge imperial 12'-0" width that equates to 3.6m wide track. The Leek terminus will not extend North of Cornhill / Barnfields Road, Leek. In terms of scale therefore, this development is smaller than the original double track railway and does not extend to the original Leek terminus.

In consultation with the Local Authority, the reduced scale of the development has allowed for CVR to accommodate for a walkway / cycle route within the proposed railway boundary. This will be protected by a simple post and wire fence. It is understood in consultation with SMDC that this is not a statutory walkway or cycle route albeit CVR consider that maintaining this facility for walkers and cyclists will only enhance the proposal for the future of the Railway.

14.0 Landscaping

The landscaping will be carefully managed during the construction works, only removing vegetation scrub necessary to complete the works in line with the Arboriculturist (Appendix 7) and ecology reports (Appendix 8) attached and referred to above.

The footpath will be segregated from the railway track, in keeping with the rural location and all infilling and repairs to the existing landscape will be sensitively carried out harnessing the existing environment to encourage wildlife and vegetation growth following the construction works. If tree replanting works are

required these will be completed in accordance with the arboriculture report referenced.

15.0 Development Site Appearance

The proposed scheme is to reinstate a single track standard gauge 3.5m railway track. The railway line will be laid with new CEN56E1 FB rails using serviceable F27 concrete sleepers, new pads, insulators and clips. This will be jointed in construction with welded joints between the flat bottom plain line rail and the points which are constructed from bullhead rail.

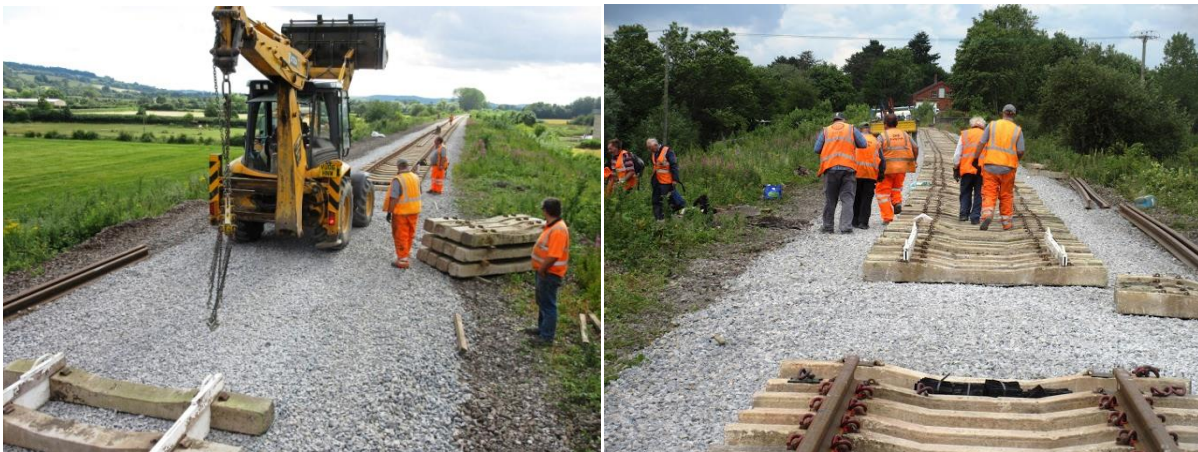


Illustration examples of the appearance of the proposed railway track.

The scheme will be carefully designed to ensure they enhance and complement the current appearance in the local area. The appearance of the site as a whole has been designed to ensure it is aesthetically pleasing, without being detrimental to the existing rural and local area.

16.0 Access

The pedestrian access to the development site is available from Barnfields Road, Leek and once constructed at Leek Brook via the unnamed road known as Water Works Lane. Vehicle access will be provided at Froghall and Cheddleton Stations under the operation of the CVR heritage railway following its construction. The existing walkway / cycle route, refer to Appendix 10, will also be maintained following the construction works. Diversions may be necessary during the construction works however these will be minimal and should not affect the existing walking route.

The car parking, pedestrian access and cyclist provision for storage and use is already provided at Froghall and Cheddleton Stations. In addition, pedestrian access and cycle storage is provided at Consall Station. The Leek, Barnfields Road access will continue from Barnfields Road and this will be developed in conjunction with this scheme and the Cornhill development. The intention is to provide vehicle, pedestrian, cycle access to the Leek terminus and this will be developed during the design stage.

There is one level crossing along the stretch of disused railway. CVR confirm in their assessment, refer to appendix 3, that Severn Trent Water use this crossing for access to the sewage works at Leek Brook. This will be reinstated as an operational level crossing (Open Type) which will require inspection and approval by the ORR (Office of Road and Rail).



17.0 Car Parking

To access this development by road, once operational will be via the Kingsley & Froghall Stations which are on the A52 Stoke-Ashbourne road at Froghall, access is adjacent to The Railway Inn. No access restrictions apply, and the car park is ideal for coaches. All coach parties are advised to go to Froghall due to bridge restrictions at Cheddleton. Car parking will also be provided within the Cornhill/Barnfields development adjacent to the proposed new station.

18.0 Local amenities

There are several shops, tourism events and convenience stores in close proximity to Leek town centre and Barnfields Road, which will be enhanced when the Cornhill development is realised. Further amenities such as a cafe, dining, Christmas, summer and Easter events will compliment the railway line from Leek at the Froghall and Cheddleton Stations. The reinstatement of the railway line will also promote expanding the network to the recently approved Stonemoney Leisure Development as well potentially Alton Towers and a main link to Stoke on Trent under the MCR railway.

19.0 Transport

The local public transportation routes are not easy in this location as it is rural and so most visitors and local residents rely on vehicle or public transport. The reinstatement of this railway will enhance public transport and links to the wider heritage railway network. The heritage railway network operated by CVR has stations at Froghall and Cheddleton and this development would add a further terminus at Leek town greatly improving transport links for Leek and Churnet Valley. This reinstatement is in accordance with the adopted Churnet Valley Masterplan, Supplementary Planning Document, 2014.

20.0 Sustainability

This project will deliver against Churnet Valley Masterplan Adopted Supplementary Planning Document (2014) which identifies key actions to support sustainability: re-opening of the rail line to Leek and development of the canal gateway, strengthen sustainable transport links between Leek town centre and Cornhill and to other visitor attractions in the Churnet Valley, create / improve non-car routes between the town and countryside. This project also acts as an enabling project in line with Stoke and Staffordshire Strategic Economic Priorities (Connected County) as ultimately the route could be utilised as part of a branch line spur from Leek to Stoke-on-Trent. This would create a vital 2-way route to link Leek with mainline rail network, and would help reduce the car dependency of the 22,000 people who currently out-commute from the Moorlands as well as providing key sustainable rail route from Stoke and Staffordshire into the Peak District National park.

Reviewed by:

Emma Haywood. 22/01/18

Churnet Valley Railway (1992) Plc